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# ADDRESSES ON THE SCRIPTURES.

# Peter in Prison.

30th THOUSAND.

PRINTED FOR FREDERICK BRODIE, J.P.,
BY JOSEPH LOVEDAY, PUBLISHER, OTTAWA, CANADA,
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# PETER IN PRISON.

## ACTS XII.

THE account given here of the imprisonment of Peter, and the answer of God to the prayers of the saints on his behalf, is not only a wonderful interposition of Divine power in favour of Peter, but a very blessed example of the faithfulness of God in answering the prayers of His children according to the many precious promises written in His Word, and which are given to those who walk according to the mind and will of God (1 *John* iii. 22; *James* i. 5, &c.).

But this most interesting history of Peter's imprisonment and release, carries beneath the surface of its narrative a succession of important lessons singularly applicable to every sinner, who by nature is in a similar position to that of Peter—morally imprisoned in sin and death, and only enabled to escape the doom awaiting him by the intervention of the Angel—Christ—by Whom alone he can be brought into the "glorious liberty of the children of God" (*Romans* viii. 21).

It was evidently the intention of Herod to execute Peter, as he had killed James, 'because it pleased the Jews', showing his personal vanity and love of popularity, and which is also further seen in *verses* 21, 22.

The blessed truths spoken by James and Peter, were of no interest to a mind thus pre-occupied: (see the words of Jesus in *John* v. 44). What words of warning! as true now as in days of old: a fearful and seducing snare to souls is the love of the praise of men. So Herod imprisons Peter, delivering him to four quarternions, or sixteen soldiers, each quarternion being a guard of four soldiers, intending to

bring judgment upon him after the feast of the Passover (translated 'Easter' in our Bibles).

This waiting-time was one of utmost importance to Peter. The assembly of saints (here translated as 'the Church') made *instant and earnest prayer to God for him*. Two very important points will be seen here—

First,—The prayer was *earnest*, without *ceasing*: it was real, heartfelt prayer; very different to the mere repetition of words from a book, or from the lips of another, which such numbers of worldly-minded souls are content with, and who are not alive in Christ at all, but dead in trespasses and sins, and who by thus giving a sort of religious 'sop' to their consciences, vainly consider that they are doing that which is pleasing to God. Let such read *Proverbs* xxi. 27, and xxviii. 9, and mark what God thinks of such prayers, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (*Galatians* vi. 7): and if he sows the *wind*, he will reap the *whirlwind of his destruction* (*Hosea* viii. 7). What multitudes there are who every Lord's-day satisfy their consciences by going *formally* through various forms of service, under the idea that they are thus worshipping God, not knowing that *real worship* is praise offered to God for being brought out of darkness, bondage, and death, into light, liberty, and life everlasting, through Christ; and not also knowing that it is only those who are *true believers* in Christ and have access to God by the blood, as Abel had (*Genesis* iv. 4), that are accepted by God as worshippers at all; if we have not a living faith, the faith that worketh by love (*Galatians* v. 6), we have no access or title to go into God's presence as His worshipping children (see *Romans* v. 1, 2, and *Ephesians* ii. 18). Such are only doing what Cain did, going to offer an offering to God without the blood of reconciliation, thus really without the real acknowledgment that

they are sinners, needing such reconciliation, and so they will find themselves in the end, as Cain found himself,—REJECTED BY GOD.

Dear Reader, think of these solemn truths of God's Word, and follow not a multitude to do evil (*Exodus* xxiii. 2), and note the "Woe" declared by the Holy Spirit against such sort of worship in *Jude* 11.

SECONDLY,—Those who prayed, were God's *own loved* saints. Prayer from such came up as a sweet odour to God (see *Revelation* v. 8). To such He was ready to listen (1 *Peter* iii. 12), and to such ready to answer (1 *John* iii. 22). How truly is this shown in *Acts* xvi. 26, etc., where it was accompanied with thanksgiving, even in the midst of trial. This indeed is acceptable to God (see 1 *Peter* ii. 20, and iv. 12–18). The prayers of God's children should ever be accompanied with thanksgiving (*Philippians* iv. 6). We are too apt to ask God for more blessings, and forget those that have already been given to us. Every day blessings of every sort are given so constantly and graciously that we consider them rather as our right, than as resulting from the constant oversight and providence of God (*Deuteronomy* viii. 3). There are wonderful examples of the power of real earnest prayer proceeding from those who humble themselves before God. See that remarkable instance mentioned of Hezekiah in 2 *Kings* xix. 15–19, and the wonderful answer in *verse* 35. The same God who was entreated then can be entreated now, for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Intercessory prayer is very blessed, but is not exercised by saints nearly as much as it ought to be. Praying for others will surely bring blessings on those who so pray. Have we not Christ our example in *Hebrews* vii. 25? So ought we to follow Him, as we shall see further on in this narrative, *verse* 8.

But prayer must be constant in order for us to obtain our desires; so was it for Peter, and so are all the disciples of Christ admonished in *Luke* xviii. 1–5. If here the unjust, unloving, ungodly, selfish judge was moved by the woman's importunity, how much more will the God of justice, of love, and mercy delight to answer the earnest unceasing prayer of His saints? Let me especially urge any desponding, or fainting soul, to consider the passages in *Luke* xi. 5–13; 1 *Thessalonians* v. 16–19; noting well the meaning of *verse* 19—"Quench not the Spirit". If ever an inclination of prayer comes into the thoughts, or any other leading of the Spirit, to holiness of walk, and abstaining from evil, yield immediately to it, and obey the Spirit's drawing, and persuading power in your heart, and by no means put it aside for a future time, or a better opportunity. Infinite blessing is lost by quenching the leading of the Spirit.

*Verse* 6. The faith of the saints was tried by the Lord to the last moment, as it were; but God is never *too late*, deliverance will surely come; and so the very night before Peter was to have been executed by Herod, the prayers of the saints are answered and he is set free by the Angel. So was it in the case of Paul going to persecute the saints at Damascus. He was armed with all authority and power, he was allowed to proceed with his journey all the way from Jerusalem up to the very walls of Damascus—150 miles; *there* the saints had doubtless prayed for deliverance from their persecutor, and, at the last moment, when he was about to lay hands upon his prey, he was confronted with a vision of Christ, and was struck down from proudly leading his band of horsemen with power and pomp into the city, even to the ground, and was obliged to enter that city led by the hand of another, on foot, blind and powerless, and broken down in spirit before the power of Christ. We see why our faith

is thus tried in 1 *Peter* i. 7. Let tried saints dwell on this scripture, and rejoice amid every trial.

In the account here given of Peter's prison, and the means used for his safe keeping, we may see that there were *seven* things to prevent his getting free; the number seven showing the completeness and perfection of the imprisoning, leaving no hope or possibility of his escape:

FIRST—*The Prison itself.* SECOND—*The Two Chains.* THIRD—*The Two Soldiers.* FOURTH—*The Keepers before the Door.* FIFTH—*The First Ward or Watch.* SIXTH—*The Second Ward.* SEVENTH—*The Iron Gate.*

*1st—The Prison.*—Peter in a dark prison, is the exact counterpart of the sinner's state by nature. Every soul born into the world is born in a prison of sin and death; we inherit such from Adam (*Romans* v. 12, 17, 19, etc.), and being as it were so accustomed to this state from our very birth, we cannot believe that our state is so bad; yet see what God says of man in *Genesis* vi. 5. Many people are offended at being told that they are captives of the power of darkness, and to the law of sin (*Ephesians* ii. 1–3; *Colossians* i. 13; *Romans* vii. 23). They refuse to credit that place where they have been bred and born, as otherwise than good; and no wonder at this, they cannot really see the prison walls, for we find from *verse* 7 that the prison was without light, and so are all men blinded by the god of this world, lest they should see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ and be saved (2 *Corinthians* iv. 3, 4). Thus, with blinded eyes, and living in their very birthplace, it is not surprising that they remain content.

But further—Peter was *sleeping*. All men by nature are asleep in death, condemnation, and wrath (see the reference to this in 1 *Thessalonians* v. 5–9). What a dangerous state is this! we might be sleep-

ing on the very edge of a precipice, and yet be content with such a position, not being aware of our danger, for sleep has closed our eyes, and while so sleeping we may be dreaming of being in a place of perfect security: so also in sleeping in a prison we may be dreaming, and really at the time imagining that we were in a palace, in perfect freedom, and revelling in the wealth and splendour of this world, being for the time unconscious of our real state. So one pinched by hunger, worried by trial and distress, might dream of feasting, of enjoyment, of all the comforts and pleasures of this life, only to wake up to the bitter truth of reality in the end. Thus precisely do sinners in these days; they pass through life as a dream, some in comparative happiness and contentment, feeding on the "*swine-husks*" of the empty pleasures, vanities, and amusements, and excitements of this life, ever feeding, but never satisfied with the things that are of this world; others, in the unquiet dreams of unsatisfied hearts, bearing about in themselves the effect of sin, are all more or less in a state of forgetfulness of that awful eternity hanging over them, and of the doom at that great judgment day. Just as Peter slept with the sword of Herod about to descend upon him, they also sleep, not thinking of the moment that will surely come to call them to eternity, when there will be a fearful awakening to the actual state of their imprisonment, their dream dispelled, and they find themselves victims of a willing delusion, to spend eternity in that place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, and where is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. The pleasant dream may have lasted a few years, but the waking state of hell will last for ever!! Consider that terrible but no less true picture given by the Lord Himself in *Luke* xvi. 19–31.

*2nd—The Two Chains.*—Not only is every soul in a prison, not only by nature born in the dark,

not only asleep, but further, *he is bound with two chains*. It was the custom to bind the prisoners with two chains to their guards in these times here spoken of (see *Acts* xxi. 33); this is very significant in the case of the sinner. First, two—both hands as well as feet, completely, hopelessly bound. These chains represent the chains of sin and darkness, and are referred to in 2 *Peter* ii. 4.

All unsaved sinners are bound thus by sin, as well as in prison, and it is the glorious gospel of glad tidings, peace and good will towards man, that is now offered by God through Jesus Christ that can set us free; as is said in *Isaiah* lxi. 1, 2, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that *are bound*; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord". This is typified by the Angel, in *verse* 7.

Secondly. The chains were heavy, and therefore strong; see what the Psalmist says, "Mine iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (*Psalm* xxxviii. 4). Thus are poor sinners weighed down by these chains; they cannot rise without help, for their burden is too great for them. A similar judgment is prophesied regarding the time of the end in *Isaiah* xxiv. 20, in similar language, "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard,.....the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again". These chains gain their strength from God's broken law (1 *Corinthians* xv. 56), and thus by these heavy strong chains that we cannot break, are we bound.

*3rd—Two Soldiers.*—The first one may well represent God's Judgment.—It is God's unalterable decree, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," death being the penalty of the transgression of God's law.

Thus was death, sin, and curse first brought into the world by Adam, the first transgressor of the command given by God to him in Eden (*Genesis* iii. 17). And so we are inheritors of Adam's sinful nature, and are all under sin (*Romans* iii. 9).

The second, God's JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.—It will be an awful day when all these who do not get freed from these two soldiers will have to face God. The day is coming when all will be judged in righteousness (*Acts* xvii. 31). The day is coming when all living in this world will try to flee from the wrath of the Lamb (*Revelation* vi. 16, 17). The day is coming when these soldiers will bring out their prisoners to the great condemnation of hell fire (*Revelation* xx. 11–15).

God is of purer eyes than to behold evil; He cannot look on iniquity (*Habakkuk* i. 12, 13). Thus will all the wicked be reserved for punishment at the day of judgment. None can ever escape the exactness of God's righteousness, all must be condemned; but, thanks be to God, while His justice is so great, His love has been greater; He has made a way of escape through Christ, our delivering Angel, our Ransom (read *Isaiah* xxviii. 16, 17, etc., and 1 *Timothy* ii. 4–6).

How many souls are there who vainly hope, that as God is a merciful God, they will be forgiven their sins at the last day. Surely if God's justice was so exact that it demanded the life of His own Son Jesus Christ to make a way of escape for poor sinners, will God, who did not spare His beloved Son, spare those who take refuge in such vain hopes and lies, and who deliberately reject the atonement of Jesus so freely offered to them NOW? It is this very rejection of Christ that will be their condemnation in the day of judgment (*John* iii. 19).

4. *The Keepers before the Door.*—These may apply to represent the Devil and his angels; he is ever on the watch for sinners, and "goeth about

as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" (*1 Peter* v. 8). There is no number here mentioned of these keepers; the other causes preventing escape are all *limited*. Surely this is designedly so. We read of the number of devils that took possession of the madman in *Mark* v. to try and ensnare his soul, and that they afterwards went into *two thousand* swine; their name was *Legion*, a word denoting *six thousand* soldiers: hence we may justly conclude there were at least *two* if not *six* thousand devils in possession of this man.

We are also told that we wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (*Ephesians* vi. 12). Surely these expressions denote the exceeding number of our spiritual enemies, and well may they be unlimited in being "keepers before the door". Could a soul break from the chains and escape from the soldiers, here would be an innumerable company of keepers to pass through, an impassable barrier of itself.

*Verse* 7. We come now to the brighter and more glorious part of this narrative; hitherto all has been gloom, now comes deliverance and light.

It will be observed that immediately the Angel appears on the scene, then there is light; it must be so, as see *John* viii. 12. He smites Peter on the side, and urges him to rise up *quickly*. What a blessed picture is here of Christ, our Deliverer from prison and bondage. How truly does this accord with *Ephesians* v. 14, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light". But first he smote Peter on the side. What does this signify, but a call to awaken?—for he was sleeping.

Is not this the way God calls to unsaved sinners now? Does He necessitate some affliction, some trial, some illness or bereavement it may be, some stirring on the side, in kindness, in love, anxious to draw

the attention of the sinner to Himself, anxious to awaken him and bring him into light, anxious to raise him up if he will only respond to the call? Such is the way the goodness and love of God is shown to sinners in afflictions; they cannot rise with their heavy chains upon them, but the Angel stands ready and willing and waiting to raise them up if they are willing to be raised, and the call is, Rise up QUICKLY, there is no time to be lost. NOW is the accepted time (2 *Corinthians* vi. 2). So our Saviour's call to Zaccheus was "Make haste and come down, for *to-day* I must abide at thy house" (*Luke* xix. 5). How many souls have been for ever lost by putting off this rising up, though only for a week? How many still are willing to risk their escape from an eternal prison, not only for weeks, but months and years? A fatal temptation of the Devil is that of '*plenty of time yet*', to put it off yet a little longer.

Time was, is past; thou canst not it recall:
Time is, thou hast; employ the portion small:
Time future, is not; and may never be:
Time present, is the ONLY TIME FOR THEE.

Smiting is a necessary thing, for the sleeping prisoner does not heed the prison or the soldiers, neither would he feel the weight of his chains. To awaken him to a sense of his terrible danger, or the conviction of sin, is necessary first, then a willingness to accept the proffered help of the Angel to rise up, is necessary next. Had Peter preferred a little more sleep, or delay in rising up at the Angel's call, he might have been left to his fate in prison. This is too commonly the fate of numbers, who will not heed the loving call of God when He smites, but make some excuse to themselves of inability to attend at that moment, intending at some future time to do so. Others there are who have been so far awakened as to have some sense of their posi-

tion and danger, but weariness of exertion to rouse themselves overcomes them, and they sink back into more sleep until the morning dawns, and the judgment then overtakes them,—and they are all lost for ever. But note the contrast of the one willing and ready to rise at the Angel's call, as Peter was: the response was no sooner seen than in a moment He raises him up, and directly the Angel's hand is grasped *the chains fall off from Peter's hands*. What knocked those saunder, setting the prisoner free from them and the soldiers at the same time? Surely the Angel's power. What a precious picture is this of what Christ does for sinners who are willing to respond to His call, willing to be raised by Him; *immediately* they grasp hold of Christ by a loving faith in His finished work on the cross, immediately their chains of sin will fall off, and be buried at the foot of the cross for ever, and they will be for ever free from these soldiers of God's judgment and justice. For Christ has borne our judgment for us (*Isaiah* liii. 5), and by His shed blood atonement has been for ever made: we are reconciled to God, His justice is satisfied, and we are purged from all sin for evermore (*Hebrews* x. 2, 12–20, etc.). Now we ARE delivered from the dark prison, and translated into God's Kingdom (*Colossians* i. 12–22). What a glorious translation is this from the bondage of sin to the liberty of the children of God: it is a PRESENT salvation, now, in this life (see *John* v. 24).

From this *knowledge* of our eternal safety (1 *John* v. 13) springs a *present* rejoicing in the soul so saved: it is the faith in that which is to come in the future, that which is reserved in heaven for us. It is the response of love in us to that wondrous love that God has first had for us, that causes joy unspeakable in looking forward to the time when we shall be with Him in glory (see 1 *Peter* i. 2–9). Let not *pretended humility* cheat us of these precious, joyous

truths of God's Word; many souls are deceived sadly in this way,—they are too evil, too wicked, too unworthy, to think such blessings are really for them NOW. They think it would be presumptuous for them to believe *all* this; they will believe a *little* of it, but not *all* that God says. All such I would solemnly warn, that their thoughts of unworthiness, etc., and their fear of being presumptuous is nothing more than the PRETENDED HUMILITY OF UNBELIEF. What does God say of this? He tells you that you are making Him to be a LIAR. (Read thoughtfully 1 *John* v. 10–12.) In order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, we must become as *little children*,—ready to believe ALL that the Father tells us, without hesitation (*Matthew* xviii. 3).

*Verse* 8. There are four things that Peter is bidden to do immediately after he is set free,—*first*, to gird himself; *second*, to bind on his sandals; *third*, to cast his garment about him; *fourth*, to follow the Angel.

FIRST—"*Gird Thyself*". In the admonitions of the Angel we see exemplified the truth of *James* ii. 14–26: the PROVING OF OUR FAITH BY WORKS, not to get freedom from our chains, but because WE HAVE NOT YET, as Peter then was free. Mark this *important* point. Such multitudes of souls are striving *their best* to get free from the chains of their sins by good works—as they call them—but which God calls *dead works*, not seeing that they *cannot* gird themselves as the Angel directs, neither can they *follow* Him until they HAVE BEEN MADE FREE by true faith in the finished work of Christ.

Girding was necessary to those who wore the long loose Eastern garments, before they could commence work of any sort, or active exertion in walking, running, etc. Thus the first thing for a soul set free to do, is to make itself ready for active service for the Lord, to use whatever gift the Lord may give for such service; and such girding must be accord-

ing to God's truth (see *Philippians* ii. 12, 13, and *Ephesians* vi. 14).

SECOND—"*Bind on thy Sandals*". This is equivalent to our putting on our shoes, or getting ready so as to be able to walk. We are told with what our feet should be shod in *Ephesians* vi. 15—"The preparation of the Gospel of Peace". Thus equipped with truth and peace, and our hearts being ready to do thus far the Angel's bidding, we get a further command. And *mark*,—Peter *did* the first two commands before he got any further ones from the Angel:—"and so he did"—Then the Angel said—

THIRD AND FOURTH—"*Cast thy garment about thee and follow Me*". When we exemplify the genuineness of our faith by our readiness to obey steadfastly the Angel's words, we prove that *we have* that precious garment or robe of God's righteousness given to us through Christ (2 *Corinthians* v. 21). Let us remember that we are thus clothed, and be careful in our path through life to keep this garment unspotted from the world (*James* i. 27). There is another covering to assist us in this, the Spirit of God (*Isaiah* xxx. 1). He must not only be dwelling in us, as is the case with every true believer (1 *Corinthians* vi. 19), but He must be the guiding influence of all our actions, which He will be if we do not quench His blessed leadings, or grieve Him by the waywardness of self-will; thus we shall be preserved from those chilling influences of the night of this world, as Paul calls it in *Romans* xiii. 12, and so be enabled to follow the Angel—Christ—in our walk here below into perfect freedom from prison, even as Peter followed the Angel into the night air of freedom *outside* the prison (*verse* 9), and doing this we shall get another garment upon us, the 'garment of praise' (*Isaiah* lxi. 3), in the place of that spirit of heaviness resulting from bondage.

Is there not much to learn here for those who

*have been* set free from sin by faith in Jesus, but yet are in much bondage, in much darkness, not enjoying the liberty of God's own children, harassed with doubts and uncertainties, without their calling and election being sure in their own eyes (*2 Peter* i. 10). Such souls have not obeyed the Angel's first two injunctions, so they have not *followed* him out into liberty, joy, and peace, but are yet remaining in the precincts of the prison darkness; and, though entirely free from the two soldiers, yet they are hindered by the keepers before the door, and the two wards or watches of the night.

*5th—The first Ward.*—A ward means a watch, or night guard of soldiers, a further precaution for preventing the escape of the prisoners. The first ward may well be represented by our own evil hearts and inclinations, and every evil desire, or temper, or will, that proceeds from such a heart. That which is called works of the flesh in *Galatians* v. 19–21. This one alone would be an overpowering hindrance without help from the Angel.

*6th—The Second Ward.*—This may well be represented by the evil influences of this world. The pleasures and pride of life, the follies, pomps, and vanities, amusements, gaieties, theatres, revellings, etc., etc., the praise of men rather than the praise of God, and every earthly idol of wealth and riches, and luxury, and ease. A terrible ward or hindrance is this, even to some dear Christians.

There are thus mentioned in this narrative three *active* watches, or hindrances to the prisoner's escape from the prison. First, the keepers before the door, and these two last mentioned wards. And here are seen again those three great enemies of souls—THE DEVIL (the keepers), THE FLESH (first ward), THE WORLD (second ward). These were the three temptations offered to our Saviour when tempted in the wilderness: read *Luke* iv., where, in *verse*

3, is the temptation of the *flesh*; *verse* 6, that of the *world*; *verse* 9, that of the *devil* or destruction of life. Again the same is repeated in the parable of the sower, in *Matthew* xiii., where in *verse* 4, the first class are lost by yielding to the temptation of the *devil*; in *verses* 5 and 6, the second class are lost by yielding to that of the *flesh*; and in *verse* 7, the third class are lost through the temptation of the *world*. This trinity of evil is seen in another manner in the three sorts of Leaven which our Lord told His disciples to beware of (*Matthew* xvi. 6, and *Mark* viii. 15); the Leaven of the Pharisees—hypocritical religion (*Matthew* xxiii.; 2 *Timothy* iii. 5); the Leaven of the Sadducees—philosophy and vain deceit (*Colossians* ii. 8); the Leaven of Herod—worldly power or state authority; and these three Leavens combined form the Great Babylon of worldly Religion of the present day, commencing with Rome the Mother, in *Revelation* xvii. 5, and extending to her daughters throughout the world, also see *Matthew* xiii. 33, where the corruption that will pervade all *professing Christendom* at the end of this age is foreshadowed, corresponding to the last state of the professing Church in *Revelation* iii. 14–18, when the Lord 'spues it out of His mouth.' Again this trinity of evil is spoken of prophetically in *Zechariah* v. 7–11; the *woman* in the ephah, 'wickedness' carried by *two women* having *wind* in their wings to the land of Shinar or Babylon, to build a house for it there, and set it up on '*her own base*.' These three mystical women are further seen in *Matthew* xiii. 33, *Revelation* ii. 20, and xvii. 3–5; all connected with that mystical Babylon of professing Christendom of the latter times. It is finally seen in the devil's counterfeit of the three Persons of the Godhead in *Revelation* xiii., first in the Dragon, or the source of power (the counterfeit of the Father); secondly the first Beast, that has been killed and risen again (the counterfeit of the

Son); thirdly, the second Beast, who leads to idolatry or false religion (the counterfeit of the Holy Spirit); this trinity of evil forming the final apostacy of the last days of the world during the approaching Great Tribulation.

It is the passing these three ever active guards that constitutes the fight of faith in the true believer (*1 Timothy* vi. 12). Peter indeed seems to pass by them without serious hindrance, and is not stopped in his passage out; so also WILL EVERY BELIEVER who FOLLOWS OR CLOSE AFTER THE ANGEL; and why? For we who believe have exceeding power if we really lay hold of it by faith (*Ephesians* i. 19), including power over *all* the power of the enemy (or devils, the keepers of the door—*Luke* x. 19), as well as over *all sin* (or the two wards—*Romans* vi. 14); but to do this we must follow the Lord closely in this life.

Those believers in Christ who do not do this, but are cold and half-hearted towards God, are such who do not gird themselves for service to God, to follow the Angel. They may be free from the chains, but they linger in the prison gloom, hindered from true light and liberty by the keepers and the wards, up to the very iron gate itself. For we must ever remember another lesson taught here. The Angel does not *force* Peter to do anything. The Angel does all that which Peter could not do, but leaves to the free will of Peter himself the following of His injunctions and commands. Peter willingly obeyed, and got free from all hindrance, and so it depends on the willingness of our thorough obedience to Christ whether we get into full and blessed liberty and rejoicing (2 *Corinthians* x. 5, 6, and *Ephesians* iii. 17–20).

*(7) The Iron Gate.*—What a singular recital is here. This gate *opens of its own accord* when the Angel and Peter approach it. Surely this represents the gate of death, for through it all must pass either

in freedom to the new Jerusalem above, or in bondage to the judgment of the Great White Throne. This iron gate represents strength, be unyielding, rigid, firm, not to be broken through or forced open.

This iron gate was set up when Adam fell in Eden, but when Christ died its power was gone to keep in any who followed that Angel Christ. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 *Corinthians* xv. 55, 57). That gate was broken open by the death and resurrection of Christ; there is no need of unlocking it or unbarring it now; death's power is gone, and can no longer detain the sinner (*Matthew* xvi. 18), and when any such approach it *in company with* the Angel, it not only does not offer resistance, but opens of its own accord, thus acknowledging its powerlessness to retain any soul set at liberty by Him, and we pass on at once, FREE, not to Hades now, as it was in former dispensations, but where we shall be in the presence of the Lord Himself for evermore (*Philippians* i. 23; 1 *Thessalonians* iv. 17).

But, dear reader, solemnly remember that those who remain in that prison, chained to the soldiers, and who do not respond to the Angel's call of "*rise up quickly*", will remain to await that day of judgment to come, when they will pass through that gate as PRISONERS—for all must go through it—on their way to be judged according to their works, and to receive the awful sentence from the great white throne, of being cast into the LAKE of FIRE for ever (*Revelation* xx. 11–15).

K. B.

No. 1.

I WAS ONCE A CHILD OF WRATH. I AM NOW A CHILD OF GOD.

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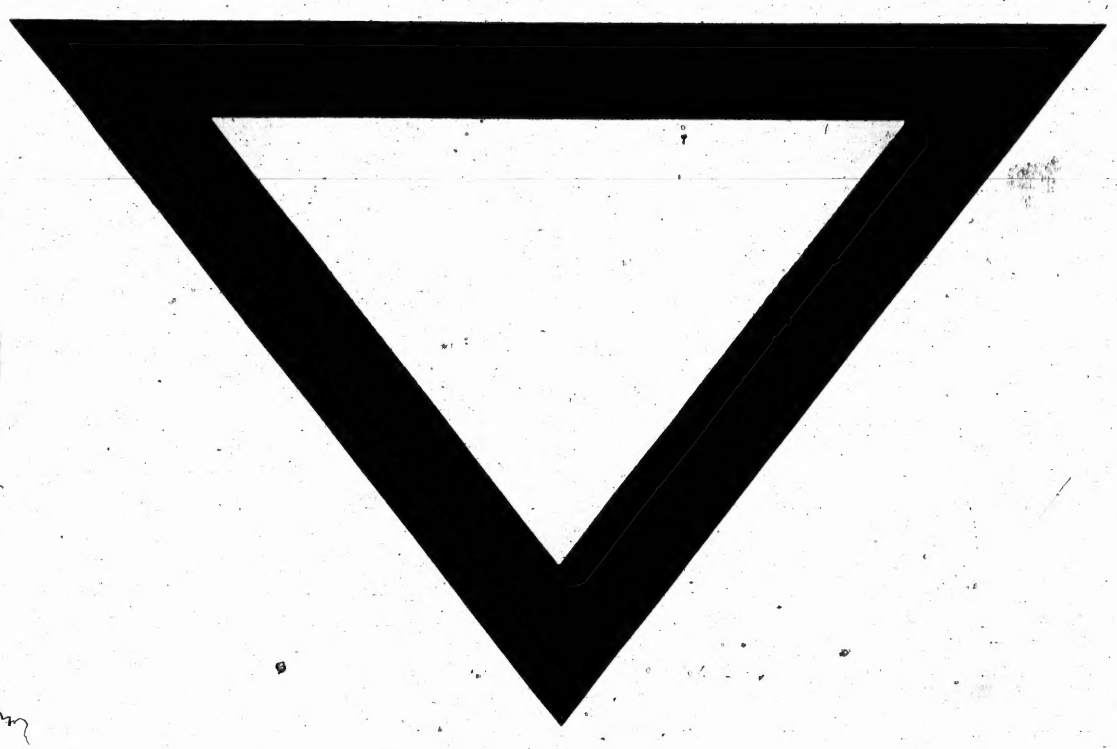

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